

# DREAMS OF PARADISE IN BARBADOS

BY MELODY WREN

“CAN YOU BELIEVE WE’RE ACTUALLY HERE?” MY DAUGHTER, SARA AND I SAID SIMULTANEOUSLY AS WE LINKED OUR REFRESHING COCKTAILS WITH SIGHTS OF THE FLAWLESS TURQUOISE OCEAN ON THIS BARBADOS DREAM TRIP.

That rooftop bar at the O2 Beach Club & Spa in the highly lauded St. Lawrence Gap along the south coast was perfect for winding down our busy days. It seemed undiscovered by other guests and we often had it to ourselves. Some days it was difficult to leave the luxe all-inclusive resort with its “breathe-it-all-in” atmosphere of pools, restaurants and endless scenic sea scenes, but with so much to see and do we tried to balance the two.

Barbados fulfilled our dream of a tropical Caribbean island escape, well complemented by an overlay of British charm. See British influences like driving on the other side, school children in uniforms and traditional British dishes on menus, many with a Caribbean twist. The weather is unmistakably idyllic and the iconic pink sand beaches formed from broken coral pieces make an ideal backdrop to the sapphire sea, attracting snorkellers, divers, sailors, paddleboarders and kayakers.

But there are just as many land-based activities with high-end golf courses, zip lining and caving and hiking that make Barbados a hub for all types of travellers.

Here are three ways we found our paradise dreams, Bajan-style:

## DEEP DIVE

I love snorkelling whenever I have the opportunity but snorkelling with my daughter was a new experience for both of us. We were on a sunset cruise on a spacious catamaran with Calabaza Sailing Cruises off the coast of Bridgetown, the capital. Floating in warm aquamarine water, we stopped to snorkel surrounded by enormous olive-green sea turtles. The marine encounter was only interrupted by swarms of iridescent sergeant majors. Later, as we returned to the marina, a sudden tropical rainstorm showered us, creating a double rainbow that added a hint of magic to a delightful evening.

## FEEL THE FEARS AND JUST DO IT

Sara had never zip lined before, so I was eager to introduce her to one of my favourite adrenalin hits. After climbing the steep stairs at Eco-Adventure Park at Harrison’s Cave, our guide Malakai attempted to quell Sara’s jitteriness during the safety drill. Suspended high in the air hovering over the edge of the platform my daughter blurted, “I don’t think I can do this.”

After completing the first zip line, he assured Sara that the next part of the course of multiple zip lines would be easier. She screamed, “What do you mean? I thought there was only one!” By the time we were done, Sara wanted to go again not just to soar through the leafy canopy but to feel the burst of adrenalin that comes with it.

Our next bonding excursion was on a subterranean tram 46 metres below at Harrison’s Cave, a geological wonder situated in the heart of Barbados. We found ourselves in cathedral-like caves crowded with families of stalactites and stalagmites, large and small, glistening with the mineral-laden water that forms them, some as old as 7,000 years. The guide described two large stalagmites nestled into an alcove as a couple about to get married. It was nicknamed “the altar” as many tourists propose at that point. The bonding moment intensified as the tram exited towards the light and we both sighed with relief.

PHOTOS: WEST BARBADOS





## SPECIAL FEATURE

### MADE IN BARBADOS: DID YOU KNOW?

Barbados celebrates an A-list of celebrities and visionaries.

- Worldwide award-winning musical artist "Rihanna" or Robyn Rihanna Fenty, who was born and raised in Barbados, is the island nation's ambassador for culture and youth.
- Zane Maloney, the FIA Formula Two and Formula Three Champion—who is affectionately known as "The Boy from Barbados"—can be seen racing the adrenalin-speed circuit at the local Bushy Park raceway in Saint Philip.
- Cricketing legend Sir Garfield Sobers a.k.a. "Sir Gary" to locals is a national hero.



### THE NEW SAM LORD'S CASTLE

Go for the ultimate legendary all-inclusive experience at the brand-new Sam Lord's Castle Barbados. Part of the Wyndham Grand Resort portfolio, the 422-room beachfront property combines eco-luxury and sustainability in one. Barbados has a focus on sustainability, so the resort fits right in, with green living and well-being at the core. An organic, allergen-friendly approach to building materials is used throughout, which makes for a serene and healthy holiday lifestyle.



### CHANNEL YOUR INNER ARTIST + SUPPORT LOCAL ART

For an immersive experience, founder of Earthworks Pottery David Spieler, who is a true craftsman with over 35 years of expertise, helped kick-start our creativity. His pottery studio located in St. Thomas is open for tours and demonstrations. He walked us through the bowl-making process as we took turns at the potter's lathe, which looked easier than it was. David mentioned that when he first started, he used to make bowls at night so no one would see. His gift shop resembles a candy store loaded with a rainbow collection of brightly coloured plates, cups and bowls and housewares available in earthenware and ceramics.

An ideal souvenir is to buy authentic locally made reminders, ones that support resident artists and their craft. In Bridgetown, there are galleries and shops galore under one roof at the Pelican Craft Centre. At this replica wooden chattel house you'll find an array of locally made arts and crafts.

For more island creations, be sure to visit the Barbados National Art Gallery, a must-see venue where you can see striking contrasts of the past, present and future in colourful artwork displayed in paintings, drawings, prints, photography, sculptures as well as mixed media. Landscapes and portraits of locals by Barbadian artist Arthur Atkinson and digital prints depicting scenes of home life by Ewan Atkinson are prominently on display. **BB**



#### TRAVEL PLANNER

To make your Barbados dream a reality, visit [visitbarbados.org](http://visitbarbados.org) and subscribe to the newsletter, and check out Instagram or Facebook @visitbarbados.

PHOTOS: VISIT BARBADOS / SAM LORD'S CASTLE

## GREAT ESCAPES

### LUXURY LURES BUT ART ALLURES IN THE PALM BEACHES

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY JIM BAMBOULIS

*There's no ordinary around America's First Resort Destination. Ever since Florida's tourism granddaddy Henry Flagler lured northern glitterati during the epic days of rail travel to this ocean playground seeking tony beach hideaways, posh golf courses and luxe stay-overs, this sun-kissed swath in South Florida has been full of surprises.*

Only one hour north of Miami, 76 kilometres of tropical beachfront awaits as does a rich treasure chest of 39 charming communities that blissfully continue to provide a winter oasis. But The Palm Beaches is far more than glitter and golf. From Tequesta to Boca Raton, this swanky setting for luxury seekers has been rightly dubbed Florida's Cultural Capital. Home to a multitude of museums, gardens and performance art centres, the Palm Beaches is South Florida's unabashed cultural darling that hosts an eclectic, ever-thriving arts scene especially come winter time.

#### DELRAY DELIVERS ART

Bursting with murals and sculptures, the Pineapple Grove Arts District is the epicentre of cool. Within this artsy enclave, find Arts Garage, a funky arts venue that stages Grammy Award-winning concerts, stand-up comedy specials, and local theatre productions. Nearby, Arts Warehouse pulsates with thought-provoking local grassroots works. For eye-popping visuals, embark on a self-guided mural walk along Art Trail to view 40+ murals.

#### MUST DO

Head to the celebrated Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, home to changing exhibits and gardens inspired by traditional Japanese styles. This cultural treasure will make you stay for hours. There are over 7,000 art objects and artifacts like ancient surreal ink on silk paintings and sparkling tea collections, including special events.

#### HIP TO BE SQUARE IN DOWNTOWN WPB

In West Palm Beach, Worth Avenue has been a mega-millionaire hub to shop, stroll and be seen ever since its early heydays, while Flagler's Gilded-Age Whitehall mansion is now a museum in neighbouring Palm Beach. But by 1926, the Harriet Himmel Theatre, built in the quirky Spanish Colonial Revival style, opened to great fanfare in Rosemary Square. Today this culture centre in downtown WPB is surrounded by The Square, which is an expansive Venetian/Mediterranean-style piazza that's part plaza, part outdoor art gallery, and home to colourful murals, and larger-than-life public installations. In the centre, Jeppe Hein's whimsical, jet-powered Water Pavilion is an interactive piece of disappearing "rooms" created by two intersecting rings of vertical water walls gushing two metres high.

#### MUST DO

Wine and dine in over two dozen cafés and restaurants in The Square, before exploring pop-up galleries, local music, and interactive experiences, including Paint & Sip, where guests create masterpieces with vino in hand. **BB**



#### TRAVEL PLANNER

For more arts inspired travel information visit [thepalmbeaches.com](http://thepalmbeaches.com)